

Land Use and Ownership in Idaho



Chapter Goals:

After completing this chapter, volunteers should be able to:

- Distinguish different land management agencies in Idaho.
- Understand the different values for which public land is managed.

Private Land Ownership in Idaho

Thirty percent of Idaho is privately owned. (See Appendix A)

Public Land

Sixty-four percent of Idaho's area is public land (Western States Tourism and Policy Council, 2005). This is in sharp contrast with states like Texas and Iowa that have 6% and 2% public land respectively. Public land has many benefits to Idahoans and visitors alike, but few people appreciate public land management agencies and how they manage our land for our benefit.

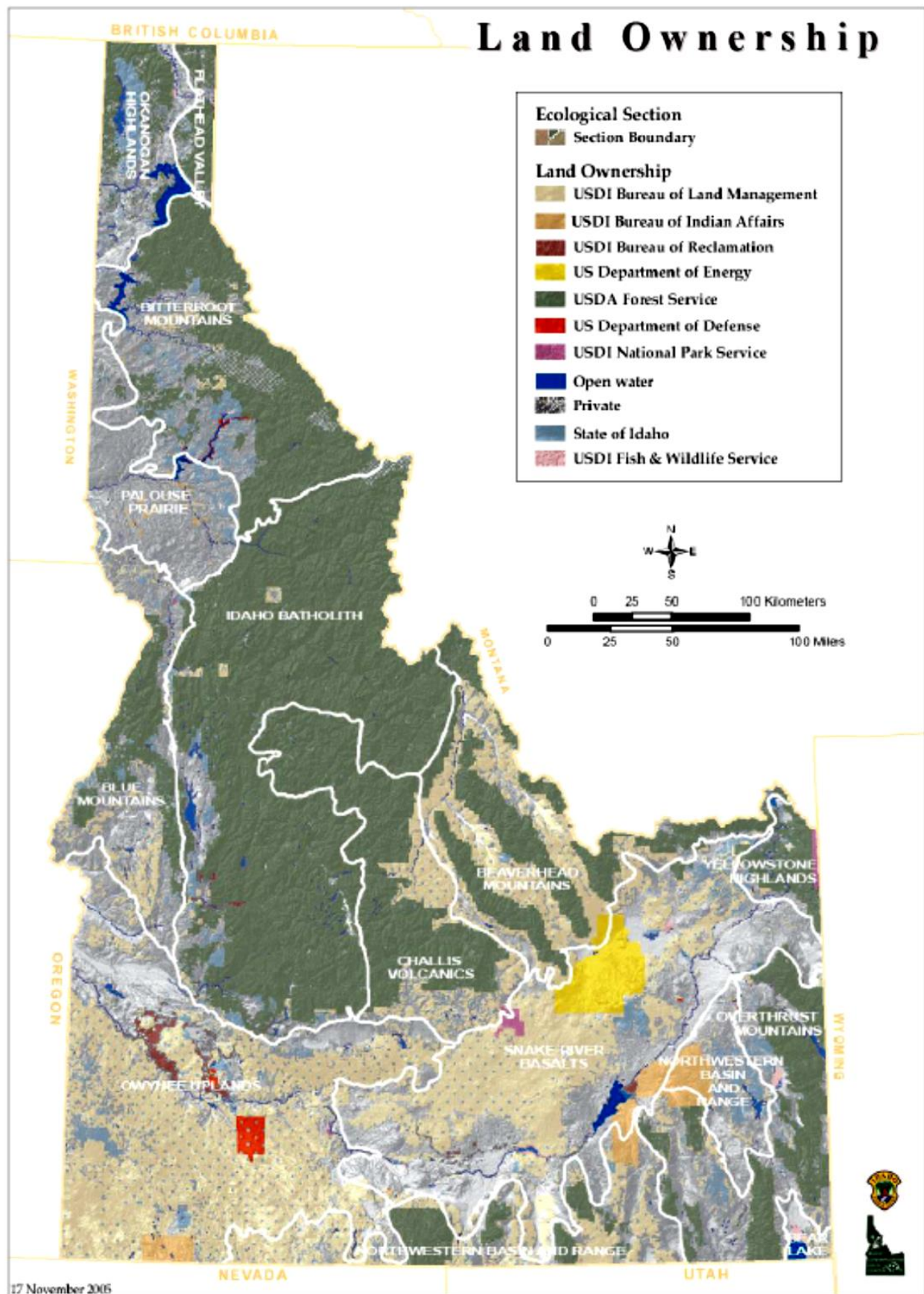
If you don't remember anything else about public land management, remember there are many stakeholders involved and philosophies of some of the common public land management agencies will help you interpret what you see on the land and why.

Public land can be managed at many different levels of government.

Federal, tribal, state, county, and city governments can all manage public land. Since there are several entities that manage public land in Idaho at each of these levels, it is no wonder figuring out who manages what can be a challenge.



The Access Yes! Program is sponsored by IDFG. This program provides compensation to private land owners for providing public access for recreation.



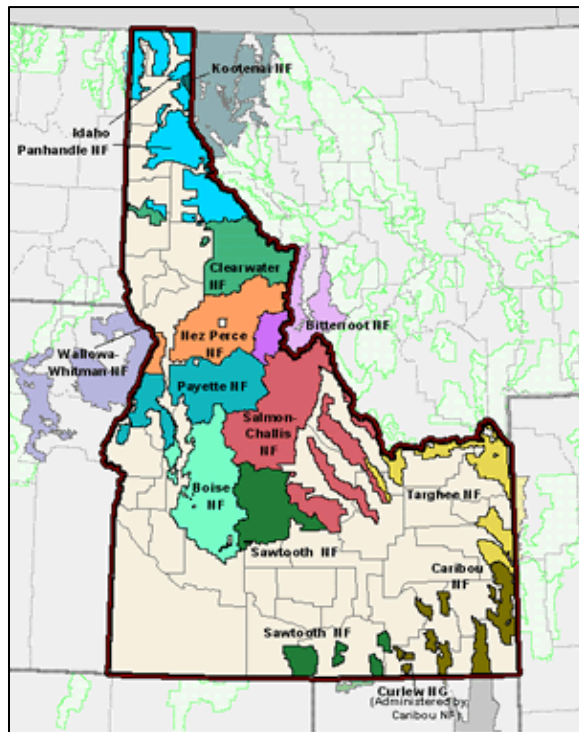
Land Managed by the Federal Government

Eight federal entities manage land in Idaho:

- USDA Forest Service (USFS)
- USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- SDI National Park Service (NPS)
- USDI Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- US Department of Defense
- US Department of Energy
- USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs

Each agency has a specialty and slightly different mission for how it manages your public land, and only some of the agencies' main function is to manage primarily for natural resources. If you can remember back to your political science class, you will remember there are three branches of our federal government; the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch and the Legislative Branch.

Within the Executive Branch, there are 15 departments. The Department of Energy and Defense are their own departments. All other federal land owners in Idaho are found in the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior.



Ten National Forests are represented in Idaho. Find the forests near where you live.



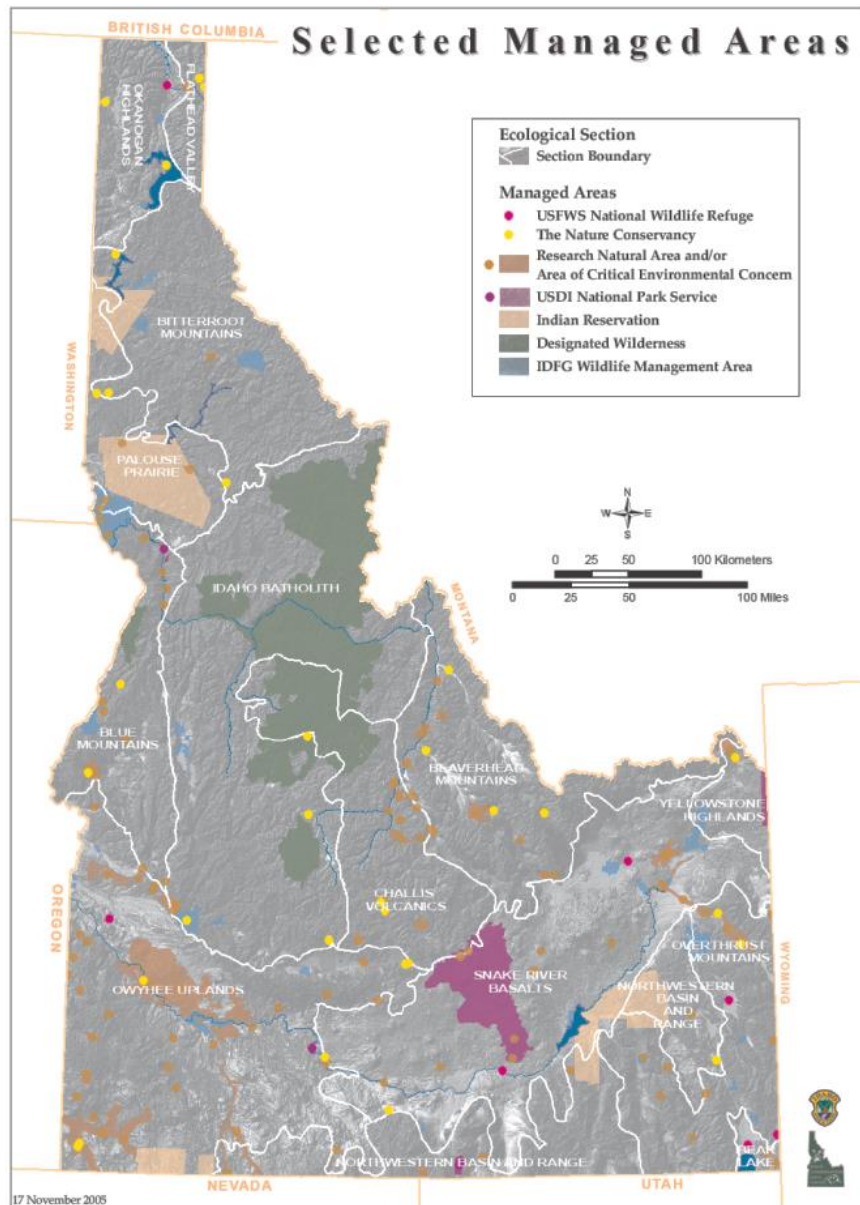
The USDA Forest Service is a prominent federal land management agency in Idaho. This is the only land management agency in Idaho that resides in the Department of Agriculture. You have most likely been to many National Forests in Idaho to camp, hike, boat, or cut firewood or a Christmas tree. It might seem odd that this agency is in the same department as the Food and Safety Inspection Service. However, looking back to 1891, when the Forest Service was created, our country was developing and growing. Forests were viewed not so much for their beauty and recreational qualities, but more for their resources of building material. Back then, trees were a crop that needed to be managed, grown, and cultivated like corn or potatoes for our developing country. Since that time, values toward trees, forests, and forest land have broadened, and so has the mission of the Forest Service. Forest Service lands comprise 20,458,000 acres of land in Idaho, nearly 40% of the state's area.

Ten forests span across the state, but do not necessarily stop along state lines. The forests in Idaho include:

- Idaho Panhandle National Forest
- Kootenai National Forest
- Clearwater National Forest
- Nez Perce National Forest
- Payette National Forest
- Salmon-Challis National Forest
- Boise National Forest
- Sawtooth National Forest
- Targhee National Forest
- Caribou National Forest

The Forest Service's mission is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's

forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." The USDA Forest Service manages National Forests and National Grasslands. (<http://www.fs.fed.us>)



Map from Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 2005.



The **Bureau of Land Management** is another prominent federal land management agency in Idaho. The Bureau of Land Management is within the Department of Interior. This agency was established in 1946 through the consolidation of the General Land Office (created in 1812) and the U.S. Grazing Service (formed in 1934). The BLM manages nearly 12 million acres of public lands in Idaho, nearly one-fourth of Idaho's total land area. Four BLM district

offices, 12 field offices, and the Idaho State Office administer the public lands in Idaho. Their mission is to “sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.” Resources they work to protect include recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, clean air and water, and scenic, scientific and cultural values.

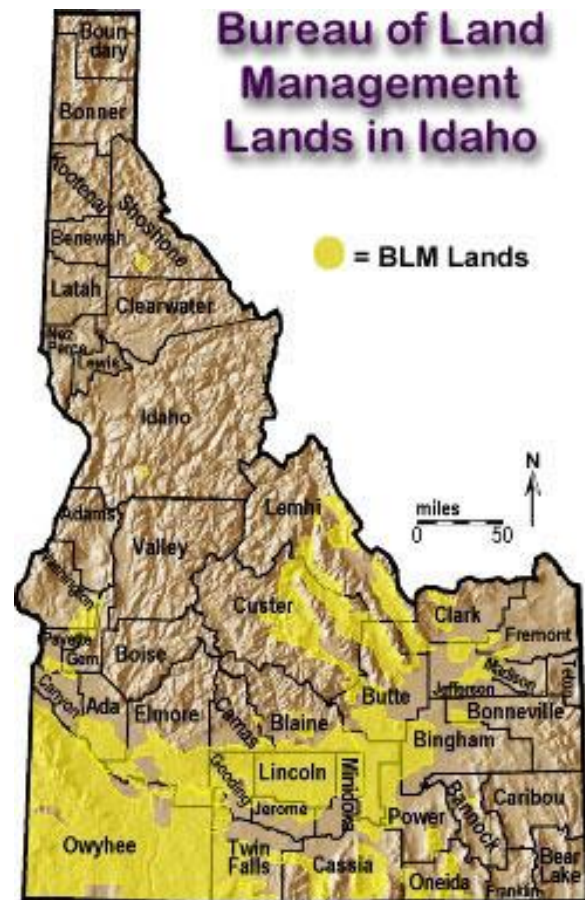
(<http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en.html>)



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s mission is “working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.” If you

have visited one of the seven National Wildlife Refuges in Idaho, you have been on public land managed by the USFWS. USFWS manages endangered species, but leaves all other management of wildlife to each state. Refuges are federally owned land that is managed for wildlife specifically. USFWS land in Idaho includes:

- *Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge* is located 7 miles southwest of Montpelier, Idaho, and consists of 19,000 acres of marsh, open water, and grasslands at an elevation of 5,900 feet in the mountain–ringed Bear Lake Valley. The Refuge is especially important as a nesting area for white-faced ibis, Canada goose and redhead. The Refuge also serves as a nesting, resting and feeding area for other ducks, greater sandhill crane, and a variety of water and shorebirds. North Beach State Park is located on the south boundary of the Refuge, and several U.S. Forest Service campgrounds are located along the west side of the valley (USFWS 2005a).
- *Camas National Wildlife Refuge* provides nesting, resting, and feeding areas for ducks, geese, trumpeter swan, and songbirds. Moose, mule deer and white-tailed deer are also present on the Refuge. Habitat in the area consists of 10,578 acres of marshes, meadows, and uplands (USFWS 2005b).



A map from the digital Atlas of Idaho. The yellow shows BLM land.

- *Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge*, established in 1909, is one of the nation's oldest refuges. Located southwest of Boise, Idaho, the refuge includes the Lake Lowell sector (10,588 acres) and the Snake River Islands sector (about 800 acres). Lake Lowell is an irrigation project reservoir that provides an oasis for wildlife in this arid region. The late-summer drawdown of the lake reveals mud flats that provide food for a variety of resident and migratory wildlife. Historic wintering waterfowl populations average over 300,000 birds (USFWS 2005c).
- *Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge* is approximately 27 miles north of Soda Springs, Idaho. The largest nesting population of greater sandhill crane in the world is found here. The Refuge is also a nesting area for Canada goose and a variety of diving and dabbling ducks. Franklin's gulls nest in large colonies and may reach nearly 40,000 in some years. These colonies also attract large numbers of nesting white-faced ibis. The Refuge consists of 18,330 acres of high mountain marsh at the foot of Caribou Mountain (USFWS 2005e).
- *Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge* is located in Idaho's Panhandle, approximately 20 miles south of the Canadian border and 5 miles west of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. This 2,774-acre refuge was established in 1965, primarily to provide important habitat and a resting area for migrating waterfowl. The Refuge is comprised of a wide variety of habitat types. Wetlands, meadows, riparian forests and cultivated agricultural fields (for producing valuable wildlife food crops) are interspersed in the valley bottom adjacent to the west banks of the Kootenai River. The western portion of the refuge ascends the foothills of the scenic Selkirk Mountains and consists of dense stands of coniferous trees and riparian forests (USFWS 2005f).
- *Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge* consists of 20,721 acres, including 11,000 surface acres of Lake Walcott, which is created by the Bureau of Reclamation's Minidoka Dam. An abundance of aquatic vegetation is found in small bays and inlets of the lake. Surrounding uplands are typical sagebrush and grassland. Up to 100,000 ducks and geese are present during spring and fall migrations. Migrating tundra swan can be seen in the spring in shallow bays and shores of the lake. Bald eagle, golden eagle, hawks, and owls are frequently seen. Mule deer are year-round residents and pronghorn are occasionally



Lake Walcott at Minidoka Wildlife Refuge
Photo courtesy, Peg Owens, Idaho Travel Council

seen. Lake Walcott State Park is located within the Refuge boundary and is managed by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (USFWS 2005g).

- *Oxford Slough National Wildlife Refuge* is located 10 miles northwest of Preston, Idaho, and consists of 1,878 acres of marshes, meadows and uplands. The Refuge serves as an especially important nesting area for redhead, as well as other nesting ducks. A variety of waterbirds, including a colony of white-faced ibis, are also found at the Refuge (USFWS 2005h).



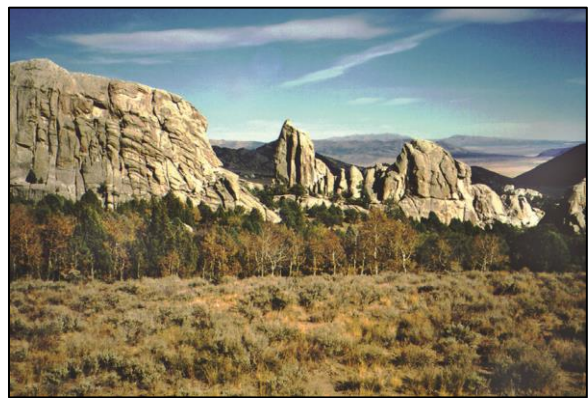
The **National Park Service** administers nine sites in Idaho. The National Park Service “preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.” In 1872, Yellowstone National Park

became the first national park in the world. The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 charges the National Park Service with a dual mandate of protecting and regulating the use of national parks "by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment for the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

- *California National Historic Trail*
- *Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail*
- *Minidoka Internment National Monument*

- *Oregon National Historic Trail*
These sites are administered by the USFWS in Idaho.

- *City of Rocks National Reserve* is located in southern Cassia County, Idaho. Beginning in 1843, City of Rocks was a landmark for emigrants on the California Trail and Salt Lake Alternate Trail, and later on freight routes and the Kelton, Utah to Boise, Idaho stage route. The area's historical and geological values,



City of Rocks
Photo courtesy, Peg Owens, Idaho Travel Council

scenery and opportunities for recreation led to its designation as City of Rocks National Reserve in 1988. This unit of the National Park System is managed cooperatively by the National Park Service and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (USDI National Park Service 2005a).

- *Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve* is located in the eastern Snake River Plain crossing southern Idaho and contains three young lava fields covering almost a half-million acres. In 1924, the National Park Service began the job of protecting the park and welcoming people to experience this area. In 2000, the Monument was expanded to include most of the Great Rift, the source of the lava flows that created this unique landscape. Today's more than 750,000-acre National Monument and Preserve is co-managed by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management (USDI National Park Service 2005b).
- *Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument* is located approximately 30 miles southeast of Twin Falls, Idaho, and contains the largest concentration of Hagerman Horse fossils in North America. The Monument is also internationally significant because it protects the world's richest known fossil deposits from a time period called the late Pliocene epoch, about 3-4 million years ago. Over 200 species of plants and animals have been found here. These represent the last glimpse of time that existed before the Ice Age and the earliest appearances of modern flora and fauna (USDI National Park Service 2005c).
- The 38 sites of *Nez Perce National Historical Park* are scattered across the states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana and have been designated to commemorate the stories and history of the Nimiipuu and their interaction with explorers, fur traders, missionaries, soldiers, settlers, gold miners, and farmers who moved through or into the area. Nez Perce National Historical Park was established as a unit of the national park system on May 15, 1965, by Public Law 89-19. The law specifies the park was created to "facilitate protection and provide interpretation of sites in the Nez Perce Country of Idaho that have exceptional value in commemorating the history of the Nation." The park is a focal point for current Nez Perce culture and allows for the continued traditional use of resources (USDI National Park Service 1997).
- *Yellowstone National Park* spans 2,219,791 acres of land in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Long before any recorded human history in Yellowstone, a massive volcanic eruption spewed an immense volume of ash that covered all of the western U.S., much of the Midwest and northern Mexico. That climactic event occurred about 640,000 years ago and was one of many processes that shaped Yellowstone National Park. Geothermal wonders, such as Old Faithful, are evidence of one of the world's largest active volcanoes. These spectacular features bemused and befuddled the park's earliest visitors

and helped lead to the creation of the world's first national park. In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed a law declaring that Yellowstone would forever be "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."



The **USDI Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)** is best known for the dams, power plants and canals it constructed in the 17 western states. These water projects led to homesteading and promoted the economic development of the West. The BOR has constructed more than 600 dams and reservoirs, including Hoover Dam on the Colorado River and Grand Coulee on the Columbia River. Today, the BOR is the largest wholesaler of water in the country, bringing water to more than 31 million people and providing one out of five western farmers (140,000) with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland that produce 60% of the nation's vegetables and 25% of its fruits and nuts. The BOR is also the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the western United States. Today, the BOR is a contemporary water management agency with a strategic plan that outlines numerous programs, initiatives and activities that will help the western states, Native American tribes and others meet new water needs and balance the multitude of competing uses of water in the West (USDI Bureau of Reclamation 2005d).

- *Boise Project:* The Reclamation's Boise Project provides water from Anderson Ranch Reservoir for residential and industrial use in the Boise valley. Arrowrock Dam, a 350-foot-high structure, was the highest concrete dam in the world when it was completed in 1915.
- *Minidoka Project:* The Reclamation's Minidoka Project involves the cooperation of Idaho, Wyoming, and the Reclamation to provide the most efficient uses of Snake River water and to equitably divide the water between the two states. American Falls Reservoir is the project's largest storage reservoir and holds up to 1.7 million acre-feet of water. (USDI Bureau of Reclamation 2005b).
- *Palisades Project:* The Reclamation's Palisades Project includes Palisades Dam, Reservoir and power plant on a 5,200-square-mile drainage basin. The project transformed an area plagued by droughts and floods into an area with a dependable water supply. Idaho, Wyoming, and the Reclamation cooperate in providing the most efficient uses of Snake River and Palisades Reservoir water (USDI Bureau of Reclamation 2005c).

National Wilderness Preservation System

As you have read, many federal agencies own and manage land in Idaho. It is confusing to keep them straight, but knowing what agency owns a piece of land can sometimes help explain the uses they promote or what you are allowed or not allowed to do there. One land designation in Idaho that can be managed by different agencies is Wilderness. The National Wilderness Preservation System has over

107,436,608 acres of Wilderness nationally and 4,005,754 acres in Idaho! In Idaho, most wilderness is managed by the USDA Forest Service, but the National Park Service manages more wilderness nationally. Throughout our country, Wilderness is managed by four different agencies; USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, BLM, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

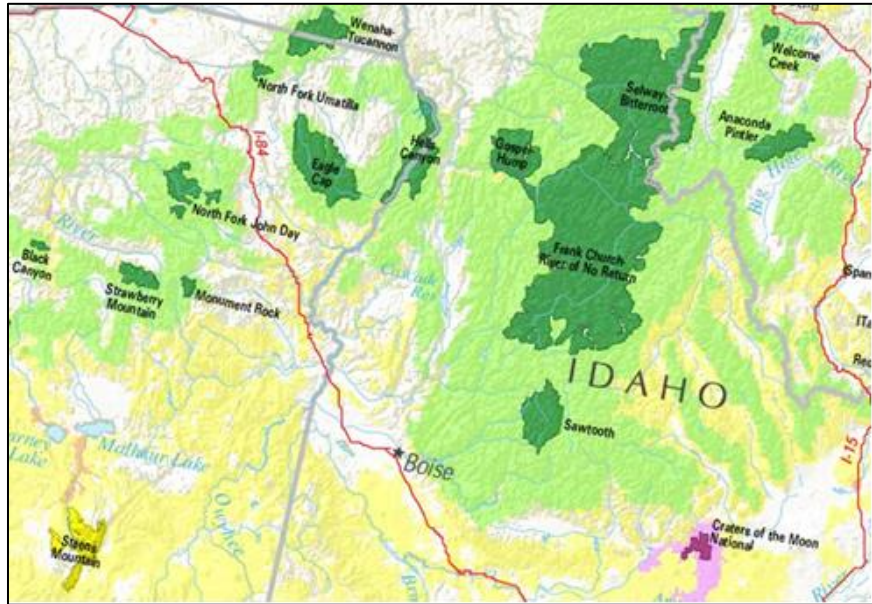
The Wilderness Act of 1964 designated the initial Wilderness Areas in the United States and helped define Wilderness as...

"...lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition..." Section 2(a)

"...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man..." Section 2(c)

"...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation..." Section 2(c)

"...generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable..." Section 2(c)



There are six Wilderness areas in Idaho: Craters of the Moon, Sawtooth, Frank Church, River of No Return, Selway-Bitterroot, Goshute Hump and Hells Canyon.

"...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..." Section 2(c)

"...shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historic use." Section 4(b)

According to the law, Wilderness is to be managed to maintain Wilderness character. Though not clearly defined in the law, today, Wilderness managers have defined Wilderness character as *"undeveloped, natural, untrammeled and providing outstanding opportunities for solitude."* Different agencies manage Wilderness differently. Sometimes, even within one agency, different Wilderness Areas can have different rules and regulations. But in general, all Wilderness areas are managed to maintain the four components of Wilderness character mentioned above.

Wilderness.net is an online resource to help you understand what Wilderness is, how it is designated, and the unique issues surrounding managing the people that use it. Visit <http://www.wilderness.net>, and read the page titled *What is Wilderness* to learn more.



Land Managed by Tribal Governments

Tribal Governments of Idaho (Coeur d' Alene, Kootenai, Nez Perce, Northwestern Band Shoshoni Nation, Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute) manage land that *is public to the members of their tribe only*. Permission for access on tribal lands by a non-tribal member must be obtained by the tribe. All federally recognized tribes in the United States are sovereign in their own lands, meaning that tribes were recognized as sovereign before the United States constitution was written. Through treaties and executive orders, tribes have a legal underpinning in the ongoing and difficult effort to keep their cultures, traditions, languages, customs and jurisdictions alive. Members of any tribal council have unique responsibilities that include maintaining a government-to-government relationship with federal and state governments after, first and foremost, responding to the needs and issues of tribal membership. Land and environmental issues are important to all six Idaho tribes, which each have a chairman or chairwoman and a tribal council that are elected by tribal members to represent the tribe and make legislative decisions. Tribes and tribal governments remain committed to the preservation of their heritage and to controlling their destinies. (This information taken from the CWCS, IDFG 2005).

Land Managed by State Government



The mission of the **Idaho Department of Fish and Game** (IDFG) is found within the State of Idaho Wildlife Policy, which reads: "All wildlife, including all wild animals, wild birds, and fish, within the state of Idaho, is hereby declared to be the property of the state of Idaho. It shall be preserved, protected, perpetuated, and managed. It shall be only captured or taken at such times or places, under such conditions, or by such means, or in such manner, as will preserve, protect, and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this state and, as by law permitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping."

Administratively, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game is divided into regions with offices in Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Nampa, Jerome, Pocatello, Idaho Falls and Salmon. In addition, a sub-regional office in McCall operates in conjunction with the Nampa office. The headquarters office, located in Boise, is organized into bureaus representing Department functions: Administration, Fisheries, Wildlife, Law Enforcement, Communications, Natural Resources, Information Technology, and Engineering. Each bureau is responsible for direction and consistency for programs implemented by regional staff. There are currently 523 full-time employees and 384 temporary employees. (This information taken from the CWCS, IDFG 2005).

IDFG manages 375,000 acres in Idaho mostly in the form of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). These areas are managed for hunting, fishing, habitat, wildlife viewing and boating. <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/>



The **Idaho Department of Lands** manages endowment trust lands to maximize long-term financial returns to the beneficiary institutions (Public Schools, the Agricultural College Fund [University of Idaho], Charitable Institutions Fund [Idaho State University, Industrial Training School, State Hospital North, Idaho Veterans Homes and the School for the Deaf and Blind], Normal School Fund [Idaho State University Department of Education and Lewis-Clark State College], the Penitentiary Fund, the School of Science Fund [University of Idaho], State Hospital South Fund, the University Fund [University of Idaho] and the Capitol Commission) and provides protection to Idaho's natural resources. <http://www.idl.idaho.gov/>



The **Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation** manages 30 state parks and runs the registration program for snowmobiles, boats and off-highway vehicles. Money from registrations and other sources goes to develop and maintain trails, facilities and programs statewide for the people who use those vehicles. The agency manages a series of outdoor recreation grant programs that provide facilities and services to a wide variety of recreationists and the local governmental and nongovernmental organizations that serve them.

Western States Tourism and Policy Council. (2005). *Public Lands*. Retrieved July 20, 2007 from <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/wstpc/Publications/FedLandWest.htm>

References and Credits

Chapter Author:

Sara Focht
Idaho Master Naturalist Program Coordinator
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Edited by:

Clella Steinke, Upper Snake Master Naturalist

Appendix A

Land Ownership in Idaho and Land Use in Idaho

| Land Ownership | Area (ha) | Area (ac) | Percent |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|---------|
| USDI Bureau of Land Management | 4,880,828 | 12,060,741 | 23 |
| USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs | 282,317 | 697,618 | 1 |
| USDI Bureau of Reclamation | 116,883 | 288,824 | 1 |
| US Department of Energy | 231,379 | 571,748 | 1 |
| USDA Forest Service | 8,223,889 | 20,321,592 | 38 |
| US Department of Defense | 52,606 | 129,991 | <1 |
| USDI National Park Service | 39,275 | 97,050 | <1 |
| Open water | 207,188 | 511,971 | 1 |
| Private | 6,539,083 | 16,158,363 | 30 |
| State of Idaho | 1,041,156 | 2,572,741 | 5 |
| USDI Fish and Wildlife Service | 23,147 | 57,198 | <1 |
| Total | 21,637,752 | 53,467,836 | 100 |

| Land Use | Area (ha) | Area (ac) | Percent |
|------------------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Dryland Agriculture | 1,767,730 | 4,368,140 | 8 |
| Irrigated–Gravity Flow | 1,144,307 | 2,827,633 | 5 |
| Irrigated–Sprinkler | 997,317 | 2,464,413 | 5 |
| Rangeland | 8,158,798 | 20,160,749 | 38 |
| Riparian | 241,379 | 596,459 | 1 |
| Rock | 227,001 | 560,930 | 1 |
| Timberland | 7,209,007 | 17,813,773 | 33 |
| Urban | 126,506 | 312,603 | 1 |
| Water | 154,201 | 381,038 | 1 |
| Wilderness | 1,606,972 | 3,970,899 | 7 |
| Total | 21,633,219 | 53,456,637 | 100 |